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Agenda item 70 (b)
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Note verbale dated 11 January 2008 from the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, the Central African Republic, China, the Comoros, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, the Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Zimbabwe addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York listed below present their compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and have the honour to refer to resolution 62/149, entitled "Moratorium on the use of the death penalty", which was adopted by the Third Committee on 15 November 2007, and subsequently by the General Assembly on 18 December 2007 by a recorded vote. The Permanent Missions wish to place on record that they are in persistent objection to any attempt to impose a moratorium on the use of the death penalty or its abolition in contravention to existing stipulations under international law, for the following reasons:

(a) There is no international consensus that the death penalty should be abolished. The votes on this resolution in the sixty-second session of the General Assembly have confirmed this fact, and the issue has proven to be a divisive one. Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, inter alia, that "in countries which have not abolished the death penalty,

sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime". This view was reflected previously in the joint statements contained in (i) document E/CN.4/2005/G/40, in which 66 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/59; (ii) document E/CN.4/2004/G/54, in which 64 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/67; (iii) document E/CN.4/2003/G/84 in which 63 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/67; (iv) document E/CN.4/2002/198, in which 62 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/77; (v) documents E/CN.4/2001/161 and Corr.1, in which 61 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/68; (vi) document E/CN.4/2000/162, in which 51 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/65; (vii) document E/1999/113, in which 50 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 1999/61; (viii) documents E/1998/95 and Add.1, in which 54 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/8; (ix) documents E/CN.4/1998/156 and Add.1, in which 51 delegations expressed their reservations prior to the adoption of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/8; and (x) document E/1997/106, in which 31 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/12;

(b) In his statement to the plenary of the Rome Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of the International Criminal Court on 17 July 1998, the President of the Conference declared that the debate at the Conference on the issue of which penalties should be applied by the Court showed that there is no international consensus on the inclusion or non-inclusion of the death penalty, and further that not including the death penalty in the Rome Statute would not in any way have a legal bearing on national legislations and practices with regard to the death penalty, nor should it be considered as influencing, in the development of customary international law or in any other way, the legality of penalties imposed by national systems for serious crimes. Accordingly, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which is only applicable to States parties, maintains that nothing in part 7 of the Statute affects the application by States of penalties prescribed by their national law, nor the law of States which do not provide for penalties prescribed in this part;

(c) Capital punishment has often been characterized as a human rights issue in the context of the right of the convicted prisoner to life. However, it is first and foremost an issue of the criminal justice system and an important deterring element vis-à-vis the most serious crimes. It must therefore be viewed from a much broader perspective and weighed against the rights of the victims and the right of the community to live in peace and security;

(d) Every State has an inalienable right to choose its political, economic, social, cultural and legal justice systems, without interference in any form by another State. Furthermore, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular, Article 2, paragraph 7, clearly stipulates that nothing in the Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which

are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. Accordingly, the question of whether to retain or abolish the death penalty should be carefully studied by each State, taking fully into account the sentiments of its own people, state of crime and criminal policy. It is improper to make a universal decision on this question or to prescribe to Member States actions that fall within their domestic jurisdiction, or attempt to change, by way of a General Assembly resolution, the stipulations under international law that were reached through a comprehensive negotiation process;

(e) Some Member States have voluntarily decided to abolish the death penalty, whereas others have chosen to apply a moratorium on executions. Meanwhile, many Member States also retain the death penalty in their legislations. All sides are acting in compliance with their international obligations. Each Member State has decided freely, in accordance with its own sovereign right established by the Charter, to determine the path that corresponds to its own social, cultural and legal needs, in order to maintain social security, order and peace. No side has the right to impose its standpoint on the other.

The Permanent Missions to the United Nations listed below wish to request the circulation of the present note verbale as a document of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

1. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
2. Republic of Antigua and Barbuda
3. Commonwealth of the Bahamas
4. Kingdom of Bahrain
5. People's Republic of Bangladesh
6. Barbados
7. Republic of Botswana
8. State of Brunei
9. Central African Republic
10. People's Republic of China
11. Union of the Comoros
12. Democratic People's Republic of Korea
13. Commonwealth of Dominica
14. Arab Republic of Egypt
15. Republic of Equatorial Guinea
16. State of Eritrea
17. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
18. Republic of the Fiji Islands
19. Grenada
20. Republic of Guinea
21. Republic of Guyana
22. Republic of Indonesia
23. Islamic Republic of Iran

24. Republic of Iraq
25. Jamaica
26. Japan
27. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
28. State of Kuwait
29. Lao People's Democratic Republic
30. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
31. Malaysia
32. Republic of Maldives
33. Islamic Republic of Mauritania
34. Mongolia
35. Union of Myanmar
36. Federal Republic of Nigeria
37. Sultanate of Oman
38. Islamic Republic of Pakistan
39. Independent State of Papua New Guinea
40. State of Qatar
41. Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis
42. Saint Lucia
43. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
44. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
45. Republic of Singapore
46. Republic of Somalia
47. Solomon Islands
48. Republic of the Sudan
49. Republic of Suriname
50. Kingdom of Swaziland
51. Syrian Arab Republic
52. Kingdom of Thailand
53. Kingdom of Tonga
54. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
55. Republic of Uganda
56. United Arab Emirates
57. Republic of Yemen
58. Republic of Zimbabwe

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Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Securing peace and development: the role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In a presidential statement of 21 February 2007 (S/PRST/2007/3), the Security Council expressed interest in receiving a report on United Nations approaches to security sector reform. By its resolution 61/291, the General Assembly asked me to submit to it a comprehensive report on United Nations approaches to security sector reform. The present report was prepared in response to those requests.

The United Nations exists to support the maintenance of international peace and security and to assist Governments and peoples in building a world in which freedom from fear and want is a reality for all. The lessons of the past 60 years have illustrated that these goals are fundamentally intertwined; security, development and human rights are preconditions for sustainable peace. Member States are the primary providers of security, which contributes to the protection of human rights and sustainable development. The task of the United Nations is to support national actors in achieving their security, peace and development goals. To that end, the development of effective and accountable security institutions on the basis of non-discrimination, full respect for human rights and the rule of law is essential.

The United Nations has been involved for many years in assisting national actors to enhance or re-establish security, particularly in the aftermath of conflict, at the request of national Governments and/or in response to Security Council or General Assembly mandates. Despite this extensive experience, support for security sector reform has remained largely an ad hoc undertaking. The Organization has not elaborated principles and standards to guide its support for national actors in enhancing or re-establishing security. It lacks a system-wide approach to delivering coherent United Nations assistance in those contexts where it is active, and it has relatively weak capacity and resources to deliver effective support to national authorities.

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A holistic and coherent United Nations approach to security sector reform is vital. Such an approach would provide a basis for a transparent framework for reform and international principles consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and human rights laws and standards. It would facilitate the provision of assistance to national authorities and their international partners engaged in security sector reform, while recognizing that Member States will provide the bulk of assistance in this area. It would also better position the Organization to provide support for national and regional authorities in the facilitation, mobilization and coordination of assistance and resources for security sector reform. Such an approach would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations efforts in that regard, thereby contributing to the timely withdrawal of United Nations peacekeeping operations, facilitating early recovery from conflict and helping to build the conditions necessary for sustainable peace and development. To that end, it would ensure that personnel in the field received the professional and timely guidance they requested and required.

Many of the lessons learned from the experience of the United Nations system and Member States in supporting national security sector reform efforts are reviewed in the present report. On this basis, core principles that should guide a United Nations approach to security sector reform are set out. The potential normative roles the United Nations can play in security sector reform are highlighted, including the establishment of international principles and standards as well as policies and guidelines on security sector reform. Where requested or mandated, the Organization can enhance its operational role in security sector reform by helping to establish an enabling environment, supporting needs assessments and strategic planning as well as coordination and specialized resource mobilization, providing technical advice to and building the capacity of security institutions and their oversight mechanisms and supporting national and international partners in monitoring and reviewing progress.

A number of immediate priorities are recommended for the development of a holistic and coherent United Nations approach to security sector reform, in support of national actors. These include: (a) developing United Nations policies and guidelines; (b) strengthening strategic advisory and specialist capacities; (c) strengthening field capacity for security sector reform; (d) assessing gaps and resource requirements; (e) designating lead entities; (f) enhancing the coordination and delivery of support; (g) building partnerships to provide effective support, expertise and adequate resources to national security sector reform processes; and (h) establishing a United Nations inter-agency security sector reform support unit to deliver on those priorities.

I. Introduction

1. Ensuring international peace and security remains a daunting challenge for the United Nations. Despite efforts over the past 60 years, conflict and violence continue to pose a threat to Member States and peoples; freedom from fear and want remain elusive for many. Accordingly, the United Nations continues to search for effective responses to address insecurity based on its Charter. Two related central themes have emerged. The first is that security, human rights and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing conditions for sustainable peace. The second is the recognition that these fundamental elements can be achieved only within a broad framework of the rule of law.

2. Member States and their organizations remain central providers of security; this is their sovereign right and responsibility. How the United Nations can best support Member States in maintaining and enhancing their capacity to meet this responsibility within a broader framework of the rule of law and respect for human rights has become a core issue for the Organization. In recent years, the United Nations has made significant progress in defining a normative framework and in providing technical assistance in this vital area. Yet, more needs to be done, and the United Nations stands ready to expand its support for Member States and peoples in articulating comprehensive and more sustainable strategies based on national ownership. It is hoped that the present report will contribute to the ongoing efforts within the United Nations system and beyond to strengthen human rights, justice and security.

3. In a presidential statement dated 21 February 2007 (S/PRST/2007/3), the Security Council noted the importance of a professional, effective and accountable security sector for the consolidation of peace and security, in preventing countries from relapsing into conflict and in laying the foundations for sustainable peace. The Council also expressed its interest in receiving a report of the Secretary-General on United Nations approaches to security sector reform. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/61/19 (Part II), para. 144) indicated the need for a holistic and coherent approach to security sector reform within the United Nations system. By its resolution 61/291, the General Assembly endorsed the request of the Special Committee that the Secretary-General submit to it a comprehensive report on the question.

4. The present report is submitted in response to those requests. Section II below contains a description of the evolution of the United Nations approach to security, while in section III the important role that security sector reform plays in contributing to a vision of security based on the rule of law is discussed. In sections IV and V there is a review of the experience of the United Nations system in supporting security sector reform and key lessons that have emerged. In section VI the principles that should guide a United Nations approach to security sector reform are set out, while sections VII and VIII contain specific ways in which the Organization might best be placed to support security sector reform. In section IX the centrality of partnerships is highlighted, and section X concludes with some observations and recommendations.

II. Evolution of the United Nations approach to security

5. The United Nations has devoted considerable attention to articulating a common understanding of security. The United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) captures the principle that lies at the core of this vision: that men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and the fear of violence, oppression or injustice.

6. In preventing and mediating conflict, the Organization has acknowledged the importance of providing support to States and peoples to address the deep-rooted socio-economic, cultural, environmental, institutional and other structural causes that underlie the immediate symptoms of conflict (see A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1). The importance of addressing root causes has become critical in a world confronted with new and emerging threats. Meeting those challenges requires integrated strategies that incorporate local, national, subregional, regional and international approaches as well as attention to the social, economic and governance dimensions of each specific context.

7. A broader understanding of security has led to the strengthening of the collective commitment of the United Nations to protect civilians and those most vulnerable to violence on the basis of the rule of law. It has also highlighted the need for greater emphasis on international humanitarian, criminal, refugee and human rights law, as well as the incorporation of human rights dimensions in all United Nations activities. In its resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Security Council underscored that armed conflict has specific impacts on women and girls. Effective responses to violence and insecurity must be based on a recognition of those differences. Addressing the specific needs of women, minorities, indigenous peoples and other socially excluded groups in society requires the inclusion of their perspectives in the design and delivery of security.

8. In post-conflict contexts, the United Nations has emphasized the significance of a comprehensive approach to security for sustainable peace. The report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809, known as the Brahimi report) stressed that the effective protection of civilians and assistance in post-conflict environments requires a coordinated strategy that goes beyond the political or military aspects of a conflict. The Panel drew attention to the need for efforts to support national actors and called for new approaches that would bring together judicial, penal, human rights and policing experts. The report also underlined how activities undertaken early in a transition process, such as disarmament and demobilization, can have a significant impact on longer-term peace and security and must be linked, therefore, to longer term development processes.

9. Efforts to plan and implement an integrated United Nations approach have also given the Organization a better appreciation of the significance of security for early social and economic recovery. Post-conflict contexts are often seen as too precarious and unregulated to attract the investment necessary to stimulate recovery. The increased violence and crime that can flourish in fragile contexts raises further obstacles. Recent reports by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

and Oxfam International have pointed to the significant negative impact that prolonged insecurity can have on national economic growth.[1]

10. The early establishment of structures and mechanisms to protect and regulate public administration and the economy can be a crucial confidence-building step.[2] Existing inter-agency mechanisms help to ensure that security considerations are addressed at early stages. In addition, the Peacebuilding Commission has a vital role to play in facilitating support for national strategies to consolidate and sustain peace.

11. Longer-term development demands a sufficient degree of security to facilitate poverty reduction and economic growth. The World Bank's seminal study, *Voices of the Poor*,[3] has noted that physical insecurity is a central concern of poor populations around the world. Security forces that are untrained, ill-equipped, mismanaged and irregularly paid are often part of the problem, and perpetrate serious violations of human rights.

12. These findings indicate that effective and accountable security institutions are essential for sustainable peace and development, and must be at the heart of the United Nations approach to security. As described in the report of the Secretary-General on the rule of law and transitional justice (S/2004/616), the rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, including the State, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated and that are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. States and societies with the capacity, commitment and legitimacy to contribute on this basis are the cornerstones of the United Nations. The role of the Organization is to provide support to national actors in realizing that goal and to assist in the development of effective and accountable security institutions. This is the suggested basis for United Nations engagement in what is commonly described as security sector reform.

III. Security sector reform: scope and content

13. While the meaning of the term is still evolving, "security sector reform" is widely used in General Assembly and Security Council documents. I hope that the present discussion will help to capture the complexity of security sector reform and its linkages to various areas of United Nations activity.

14. "Security sector" is a broad term often used to describe the structures, institutions and personnel responsible for the management, provision and oversight of security in a country. It is generally accepted that the security sector includes defence, law enforcement, corrections, intelligence services and institutions

NB: These titles appear to be in Spanish only.

[1] Studies by UNDP estimate that the cost of violence and crime in El Salvador (*¿Cuánto cuesta la violencia en El Salvador?*, 2005) and Guatemala (*El costo económico de la violencia en Guatemala*, 2006) is the equivalent of 10 to 12 per cent of the gross national income. Oxfam International estimates that the cost of conflict on African economies has been as much as $18 billion annually.

[2] Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and Måns Söderbom, "Post-Conflict Risks" (17 August 2006), Centre for the Study of African Economies Working Paper Series, paper 256.

[3] Deepa, Narayan, Robert Chambers, Meera K. Shah and Patti Petesch, *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

responsible for border management, customs and civil emergencies. Elements of the judicial sector responsible for the adjudication of cases of alleged criminal conduct and misuse of force are, in many instances, also included. Furthermore, the security sector includes actors that play a role in managing and overseeing the design and implementation of security, such as ministries, legislative bodies and civil society groups. Other non-State actors that could be considered part of the security sector include customary or informal authorities and private security services.

15. States and societies define and pursue security according to their particular contexts, histories, cultures and needs. No single model of a security sector exists. Effective and accountable security sectors, however, have a number of common features:

(a) A legal and/or constitutional framework providing for the legitimate and accountable use of force in accordance with universally accepted human rights norms and standards, including sanctioning mechanisms for the use of force and setting out the roles and responsibilities of different actors;

(b) An institutionalized system of governance and management: mechanisms for the direction and oversight of security provided by authorities and institutions, including systems for financial management and review as well as the protection of human rights;

(c) Capacities: structures, personnel, equipment and resources to provide effective security;

(d) Mechanisms for interaction among security actors: establishing transparent modalities for coordination and cooperation among different actors, based on their respective constitutional/legal roles and responsibilities;

(e) Culture of service: promoting unity, integrity, discipline, impartiality and respect for human rights among security actors and shaping the manner in which they carry out their duties.

16. Security sectors evolve in response to changing needs and conditions. In some national contexts, this is an ongoing process that may take place according to established timelines or practices, such as periodic national security reviews. In other situations change, sometimes radical change, may be driven in response to a conflict or crisis that threatens the protection and security of people or exposes shortcomings in existing arrangements.

17. Security sector reform describes a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation led by national authorities that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the State and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law. As the Security Council noted, security sector reform "should be a nationally owned process that is rooted in the particular needs and conditions of the country in question" (S/PRST/2007/3).

18. For the United Nations, the importance of security sector reform is that it demonstrates that security goes beyond traditional military elements and involves a much wider range of national and international institutions and actors. It also highlights the need for security arrangements that take into account the linkages between the different actors. Equally, security sector reform underscores that effectiveness, accountability and democratic governance are mutually reinforcing

elements of security. Thus, security sector reform offers a framework to assist national actors, the United Nations and other international partners in implementing a shared vision of security.

IV. United Nations experience in supporting security sector reform

19. Although the United Nations has taken only initial steps in developing a coordinated approach to security sector reform, it has been involved in assisting national actors to maintain and enhance security for many years. A range of United Nations departments, offices, funds and programmes have provided a diverse array of support at the request of national Governments or the Security Council. These include the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Peacebuilding Support Office, UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), among many others.

20. In the course of this work, different parts of the United Nations system have developed specific expertise and capacity. The Department of Political Affairs has focused on security sector reform in peacemaking processes and in the context of offices or missions led by the Department of Political Affairs, while the Department of Peacekeeping Operations concentrates on support for defence, police, corrections and, in a peacekeeping context, legal and judicial institutions. OHCHR addresses the reform of human rights institutions and capacity-building for security actors, and UNDP has expertise in supporting institutional development in the areas of justice and security, as well as in legislative and civil society oversight. UNODC has proven strengths in supporting the enhancement of crime prevention capacity, while UNIFEM brings knowledge and expertise on the gender dimensions of security sector reform. In some cases, these specialist support activities are implemented as part of a larger national security sector reform effort and in coordination with other international partners. To date, however, they do not form part of a coordinated United Nations approach at the country or Headquarters level.

21. The experience of the United Nations in mediating peace agreements has demonstrated the importance of addressing security issues at the outset. Early arrangements, for example with regard to the composition and roles of security forces, can have a significant impact on peace implementation. Failure to address the requirements of effective and accountable security can sow the seeds for future conflict, as earlier peace processes in Sierra Leone demonstrated, or lead to large, economically unsustainable security forces, as Uganda has addressed. Failure to take into account the security needs of marginalized and socially excluded groups, such as women and children, can create new security problems, as alarmingly high rates of sexual violence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrate.

22. The Department of Political Affairs has assisted parties in El Salvador and Guatemala in including provisions on the roles and responsibilities of the security forces in their respective peace agreements. More recently, the Department has encouraged parties in Nepal to address security sector issues in their peace process: the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of November 2006 includes commitments

towards the integration of Maoist army combatants and the democratization of the Nepal Army, processes that have yet to begin.

23. United Nations peacekeeping operations typically encounter situations in which the capacity of national actors to provide security is severely weakened, if not absent altogether, yet in which security needs are massive and urgent. In exceptional circumstances, United Nations peace operations have been mandated to temporarily replace national authorities, providing security and creating an enabling environment for the establishment of indigenous institutions and capacity. In most cases, however, the role of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations includes assisting national authorities in restoring and reforming their security arrangements. As early as 1989, the United Nations was given the task of supporting Namibia in the development of preliminary structures for post-transition armed forces. In Angola, Mozambique and Rwanda in the 1990s, peacekeeping mandates included supporting the integration, reform and training of armed forces and involved the United Nations working with bilateral donors in coordination and delivery.

24. In implementing the recommendations of the Brahimi report to comprehensively address the criminal justice system in the development of law enforcement capacity, the United Nations has made significant strides in supporting judicial and prison reform and administration in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts. In Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this also includes capacity-building in the area of military justice. Meanwhile, the provision of support for the development of national policing institutions has been a central feature of almost every peacekeeping operation in recent years. Since 1991, peacekeeping operations have had the task of assisting national authorities in establishing new policing institutions or in building the capacity and integrity of existing structures in 25 countries. Today more than 11,000 United Nations police officers are deployed in 18 peace operations, and progress has been made in developing policies to improve the delivery of United Nations support in that area. Similarly, considerable work is being undertaken to address corrections reform.

25. UNDP plays an active role in crisis and post-conflict situations and supports the implementation of capacity-development programmes tailored to put in place foundations for recovery and development. UNDP assistance entails both justice and security and is geared towards long-term development and sustainability. At the request of Governments, UNDP emphasizes the protection of civilians, access to justice and the rule of law and democratic governance in recovery and peacebuilding environments. For example, in Haiti, Kosovo (Serbia) and Timor-Leste, UNDP assists line ministries, the police and the judiciary in designing and implementing policies to develop managerial and oversight capacity and implement institutional reforms. In Somalia and the Sudan, comprehensive rule-of-law programmes are implemented to develop the capacity of judiciary, justice and law enforcement institutions, while also empowering communities to seek access to justice.

26. The need to provide support for security sector reform as part of a more comprehensive approach is reflected in mission mandates. Since 2002, when the Security Council first recognized the need to undertake security sector reform activities in Sierra Leone, a growing number of peace operations have been given the task of assisting in security sector reform as part of or in addition to their support for law enforcement, justice and corrections reform. In Timor-Leste, the

Organization has been mandated to assist the Government to conduct comprehensive reviews of the future role and needs of the security sector. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia, the United Nations has been explicitly requested to help Governments in the area of security sector reform.

27. Experience has also highlighted the long-term nature of security sector reform. In many contexts, it is only after basic stability has been achieved, including the completion of disarmament and demobilization, the return of refugees, the completion of emergency humanitarian operations or the election of a national Government, that substantial political attention and resources can be directed to security sector reform. Following the engagement of peacekeeping operations, the Peacebuilding Commission can help to ensure sustained international support through the development of integrated peacebuilding strategies. United Nations funds, agencies and programmes, meanwhile, can support the capacity-building necessary for a sustainable transition.

28. In development contexts, an inefficient and unaccountable security sector can be a major obstacle to democratic governance and can undermine the implementation of poverty-reduction strategies. UNDP works with national and local authorities in countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil, Croatia, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Paraguay to strengthen governance of the security sector and reduce crime and violence, thereby helping to create an enabling environment for economic development. UNDP also supports civil society, the media and parliaments in Latin America and Central Asia in contributing to national debates on security issues and in developing oversight capacity.

29. Other United Nations actors, such as UNODC, provide specialist technical assistance to law enforcement officials to combat the trafficking of drugs, people and firearms that can threaten security and social development. In Guinea-Bissau, UNODC is supporting national law enforcement capacity-building in border control and the detection of illicit consignments. In Guatemala, the Department of Political Affairs is supporting the establishment of an International Commission against Impunity to investigate and prosecute illegal armed groups. OHCHR delivers human rights training to defence and law enforcement officials as part of the human rights component of integrated United Nations peace operations. In all other contexts, OHCHR is working with the military, police, prisons, courts, prosecutors, legislators and civil society and is involved in supporting rule-of-law reform and development in dozens of countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. UNIFEM works with police forces in Rwanda, Kosovo (Serbia) and the Sudan to develop national capacity to respond to gender-based violence and is making a substantive United Nations-wide contribution to promoting gender-sensitive institutional reforms in the area of security.

30. The United Nations is one of many actors involved in supporting security sector reform. Member States that have first-hand experience in the provision of effective security have significant knowledge, expertise and resources. Many Member States have provided assistance to other national security sector reform processes. In post-conflict Sierra Leone, for example, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, together with the United Nations and other international partners, is providing sustained financial and technical support to national authorities in designing and implementing security sector reform. An indication of the success of this long-term and consultative partnership with national

authorities was the peaceful holding of the second post-conflict national elections in Sierra Leone in 2007.

31. Member States that have themselves undertaken security sector reform processes can play a valuable role. Angola, South Africa and others are providing assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in several areas of security sector reform. Egypt, Rwanda, South Africa and others are providing support for the training of military officers in Burundi. Latin American States have been leaders in the development of violence-prevention initiatives and have cooperated in transferring knowledge and supporting training, including in Haiti. Central and South-Eastern European countries are working together on the basis of shared experiences in efforts to reduce violence and combat organized crime.

32. Other bilateral partners are also engaged. For example in Liberia, the United States of America, together with regional and other partners, is providing support to the Government in developing overall security sector reform strategies and providing substantial assistance in the establishment of a new Liberian army. France, for example, is contributing to border control training in Lebanon. Australia is leading efforts in the South Pacific region to assist the Government of Solomon Islands in restoring law and order and creating conditions conducive to stability and development. In Afghanistan, a range of bilateral and multilateral actors are providing assistance in security sector reform and other areas according to agreed divisions of labour.

33. Regional and subregional organizations are also engaged and often provide insights on critical local issues that can impact security sector reform. The African Union is developing normative standards for security sector reform activities, in particular in its post-conflict reconstruction and development framework. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is establishing guidelines on security sector reform and is working with national authorities and international partners in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The European Union has established principles for the provision of support for security sector reform and is providing operational support to prospective members as well as through missions to partners outside the European Union. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has formulated comprehensive guidelines on security system reform and governance and has produced a handbook to guide their implementation. The World Bank has recently carried out public expenditure reviews of the security sector in Afghanistan and the Central African Republic, at the request of national authorities, to help identify and manage sustainable resource expenditure on security sector reform; similar reviews are under consideration for other countries. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization provides advice and assistance on defence reform and related security sector reform issues to its member and partner States.

34. Altogether, international experience illustrates the need for a broad range of expertise and resources in security sector reform and the potential involvement of many different actors. This diverse experience contributes to the collective knowledge and understanding of security sector reform and demonstrates the value of a well-coordinated, integrated approach.

V. Lessons from United Nations engagement in security sector reform

35. The most fundamental lesson for the United Nations is that security is a precondition for sustainable peace, development and human rights. The withdrawal of international peace operations and the success of what is often a substantial international investment are contingent upon the extent to which national institutions in post-conflict countries can establish sustainable peace and development on the basis of human rights. The consequences of failures in building these institutional capacities have been demonstrated in repeated peace operations in Haiti, Liberia and Timor-Leste. This is one of the reasons United Nations peacekeeping operations have increasingly emphasized the need to establish effective and accountable security sectors.

36. A second key lesson is that the transformation of the security sector is inherently linked to national goals and relationships between different institutions and groups within a country. Security sector reform is, therefore, a highly political process that must be placed in its specific national and regional context. Effective support by outside actors also requires knowledge and sensitivity. Equally, successful reform of the security sector needs political commitment, basic consensus and coordination among national actors. Broad national consultation lies at the heart of national ownership. Ultimately, however, security sector reform can succeed only if it is a nationally led and inclusive process in which national and local authorities, parliaments and civil society, including traditional leaders, women's groups and others, are actively engaged.

37. Third, the integration of a gender perspective in security sector reform is inherent to an inclusive and socially responsive approach to security. Gender-sensitive security sector reform is key to developing security sector institutions that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of effectively responding to the specific security needs of diverse groups.

38. Fourth, as a national process, security sector reform cannot be isolated from other national strategies and priorities. In Afghanistan, Liberia and Sierra-Leone, security sector reform has been included in national reform agendas and reflected in poverty reduction strategies and development programmes. As a matter of principle, Member States are encouraged to formulate security sector reform in a comprehensive way that is linked to their broad national reform agendas. Any such effort must begin with a thorough and broadly inclusive assessment of national security needs.

39. A fifth basic lesson is that the reform of the security sector must proceed from a clear and realistic consideration of what is financially, operationally and logistically viable. Failure to incorporate the expertise of national economic actors, such as ministries of finance and economy and parliaments, in needs assessment and planning can result in the establishment of capacities that may become unsustainable over the longer term.

40. Sixth, issues of infrastructure, training and equipment need to be addressed as part of the reform process. Demand for increased operational capacity is particularly pressing in fragile and post-conflict environments. Bilateral and regional partners must be prepared to devote resources to capacity development and, to that end, look at how resources for substantial security sector reform efforts can be provided.

41. Seventh, effective governance and civilian oversight of the security sector are essential. Experience has shown that such issues as normative and consultative frameworks, institutional management and oversight mechanisms are often neglected in a security sector reform process, which can undermine the objectives intended to be achieved by such reform and result in a net decrease in security. Lack of attention to the rule of law, governance and oversight can also limit the practical effectiveness and durability of external support for security sector reform. The participation of non-State actors such as civil society organizations and the media is critical.

42. Despite the experience of the past two decades, the United Nations has remained an ad hoc partner for national and international stakeholders in some areas of security sector reform. The lack of a coherent security sector reform framework means that the Organization has a limited foundation on which to build a coherent and consistent approach. As a result, no system-wide policy framework, and only limited institutional structures or capacities, have been established to guide engagement on the ground. In many cases, including in peacekeeping contexts, security sector reform activities have been put in motion without adequate strategic assessment or analysis by the United Nations. The absence of a common framework and common policies has an impact on the coherence and quality of United Nations assistance to national partners and on the extent to which the Organization coordinates its efforts internally as well as with national and international partners. Too often the result is under-resourced and piecemeal activities.

43. The scope, range of actors and time frame involved in security sector reform make a common approach vital. A coherent and capable United Nations approach could assist in the development of an international consensus on security sector reform principles and practice, facilitate the provision of resources and assistance to States undertaking security sector reform and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing United Nations efforts in the field, thereby facilitating the timely withdrawal of United Nations peacekeeping missions and the creation of conditions for sustainable longer-term development. A coherent approach and capacity would also ensure that United Nations personnel in the field receive the professional and timely guidance and support they need and seek.

44. Although progress has been made in enhancing the capacity of the United Nations to deliver support in a number of areas related to security sector reform at present, many field missions receive only limited guidance in implementing reform-related tasks or projects. Few units or coordination mechanisms focusing on security sector reform exist at Headquarters or the field. United Nations peace operations often have little option but to devise their own structures and guidance to implement mandated tasks. A small number of United Nations agencies have established technical support facilities to assist in the implementation of reform-related activities; those capacities need to be strengthened to manage growing demand.

VI. Basic principles for a United Nations approach to security sector reform

45. The starting point for a coherent and consistent United Nations approach to security sector reform is the articulation of core guiding principles based on lessons learned, international law and standards and existing United Nations policies on the

broad rule of law. Those principles should establish the purpose and objectives of the Organization with regard to security sector reform and direct its engagement in specific contexts. Basic principles include the following:

(a) The goal of the United Nations in security sector reform is to support States and societies in developing effective, inclusive and accountable security institutions so as to contribute to international peace and security, sustainable development and the enjoyment of human rights by all;

(b) Security sector reform should be undertaken on the basis of a national decision, a Security Council mandate and/or a General Assembly resolution, the Charter of the United Nations and human rights laws and standards;

(c) In order to be successful and sustainable, support in the area of security sector reform must be anchored on national ownership and the commitment of involved States and societies;

(d) A United Nations approach to security sector reform must be flexible and tailored to the country, region and/or specific environment in which reform is taking place, as well as to the different needs of all stakeholders;

(e) A United Nations approach to security sector reform must be gender-sensitive throughout its planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. It must also include the reform of recruitment processes and improvement in the delivery of security services to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence;

(f) A security sector reform framework is essential in the planning and implementation of post-conflict activities. Ideally, security sector reform should begin at the outset of a peace process and should be incorporated into early recovery and development strategies;

(g) A clearly defined strategy, including the identification of priorities, indicative timelines and partnerships, is required for the implementation of a security sector reform process;

(h) The effectiveness of international support for security sector reform will be shaped by the integrity of motive, the level of accountability and the amount of resources provided;

(i) Coordination of national and international partners' efforts is essential. Lead national entities and a designated international counterpart should be identified wherever possible;

(j) Monitoring and regular evaluation against established principles and specific benchmarks are essential to track and maintain progress in security sector reform.

VII. Potential role of the United Nations in security sector reform

46. The United Nations will rarely be an exclusive actor in a security sector reform process: its primary role should be to support national authorities engaged in such processes in collaboration with key international partners. The United Nations is present in many contexts in which security sector reform takes place, although the type and duration of its activities varies. For this reason, it is critical for the

Organization to clarify the specific ways in which it could contribute to security sector reform at the global as well as the country level.

A. Normative role

47. The legitimacy and global character of the United Nations give it particular responsibility to continue to facilitate the elaboration of international principles and standards for support to security sector reform. Such standards can assist Member States, the Security Council and the General Assembly in establishing coherent and credible mandates for United Nations peace operations in the area of security sector reform. Those in turn can provide the basis for a transparent and accountable partnership between the United Nations system, national authorities and bilateral and multilateral partners.

48. The Organization could also play an important role in elaborating policies and guidelines for the implementation of security sector reform plans and programmes and ensure that peacekeeping operations and United Nations country teams engaged in reform receive practical guidance and assistance in the establishment of benchmarks and other evaluation processes.

49. In addition, the United Nations could actively contribute to the collective knowledge on security sector reform by providing a forum for international dialogue and by assisting in the further development of best practices.

B. Potential operational roles

50. It is expected that the United Nations will continue to contribute to security sector reform as requested and/or mandated. The challenge for the Organization is to retain its capacity for flexibility while increasing its ability to provide consistent and effective assistance. There are some areas of security sector reform in which the United Nations would not normally be involved, such as the provision of military armaments and other equipment and the reform of intelligence services. In many other areas, however, the Organization is already engaged and has the potential to improve its support for national processes. These areas include:

(a) Establishment of an enabling environment: supporting the creation of an enabling environment for security sector reform through the provision of security, the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants and their integration into national forces, the monitoring of human rights, the provision of assistance to transitional or elected authorities and the promotion of good governance and reconciliation processes, as well as many other activities;

(b) Needs assessment and strategic planning: supporting the establishment of national security sector reform processes, including broad participation in early needs evaluation and assistance in the development of national security strategies and implementation plans;

(c) Facilitation of national dialogue: supporting dialogue among national and local authorities, security sector actors, civil society and other non-State actors with the goal of facilitating transparent and inclusive reform;

(d) Provision of technical advice and support to components of the security sector: this includes defence, law enforcement institutions, relevant elements of the judicial sector corrections, institutions responsible for border management, customs, civil emergencies and crime prevention, among others. Also included are actors who play a role in managing and overseeing the design and implementation of security. Other potential activities include building capacity for civilian management of security and relevant justice institutions; identifying training, equipment and major resource needs; assisting in vetting, recruiting and training personnel; and supporting specific aspects of security, including the prevention of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence and organized crime;

(e) Coordination and resource mobilization: support for national and regional authorities in the facilitation, mobilization and coordination of assistance and resources for security sector reform;

(f) Capacity-building for oversight mechanisms: support for the development of executive and legislative oversight mechanisms as well as media and civil society capacity to engage in national security sector reform efforts and support effective oversight;

(g) Monitoring, evaluation and review: support for national and international partners in monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the progress of reform.

VIII. Developing a coherent United Nations approach to security sector reform

51. The development of a United Nations approach to security sector reform should be seen as part of its broader commitment to enhance delivery through greater coordination and rationalization of the system's capacities. Efforts to improve system-wide coherence have focused on the identification of common principles and priorities; the designation of lead entities for specific sectors and activities; the elaboration of mechanisms for coordination at the Headquarters and field levels; and the establishment of links with existing United Nations structures and frameworks. This approach should guide the enhanced engagement of the United Nations in security sector reform.

52. The United Nations approach to security sector reform should build on efforts to develop system-wide coherence and coordination that are already under way. The report of the Secretary-General on the rule of law (A/61/636-S/2006/980 and Corr.1) in 2006 established implementation mechanisms in that area. For example, the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, was created and supported by the General Assembly (resolution 62/70) to act as Headquarters focal point for coordinating system-wide attention on the rule of law so as to ensure quality, policy coherence and coordination. The development of targeted capacities in security sector reform would further reinforce and contribute to this broad goal.

53. The Organization's approach to security sector reform could also build on the United Nations-wide disarmament, demobilization and reintegration standards. This approach could inform the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategies and facilitate the establishment of effective and accountable security institutions. The inter-agency working group on

disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has already begun to elaborate the linkage between activities in that area and security sector reform, which could provide a useful basis for coordination in the field.

54. The guidelines and coordination mechanisms established in the areas of rule of law and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration can contribute to the development of focused policies and guidance where gaps in current knowledge and support in the area of security sector reform are greatest. These include the elaboration of a strategic framework for security sector reform processes and security sector governance; security needs assessments; guidelines for developing national security strategies, implementation plans and impact evaluations; and guidelines for United Nations engagement in support of defence sector reform.

55. The most immediate priority is the development of security sector reform policies and guidance, which will be based on existing United Nations policies, best practices and the knowledge and experience of Member States. This is particularly urgent given that the Organization is facing a significant increase in requests and mandates to provide operational support for security sector reform, often in challenging and politically sensitive contexts. There is also a need to build a credible and solid foundation for the United Nations approach to security sector reform by consolidating lessons learned.

56. Another priority is the development of strategic advisory and specialist capacities in security sector reform and planning for the mobilization of appropriate resources, particularly in gap areas. The capacity of United Nations Headquarters to plan and direct security sector reform activities in the field requires strengthening. At the field level, coordination in the planning and implementation of security sector reform activities, either in integrated United Nations peace operations or as an element of a United Nations common country assessment and development assistance framework, remains limited.

57. In countries where United Nations integrated missions have a security sector reform mandate, compact units, ideally placed within the office of the Special Representatives or their deputies, according to the needs in the field, will work with political, human rights, military, police and rule of law components to ensure that activities undertaken by a mission, as well as projects implemented by agencies, form part of an overall strategic and coherent approach. In other contexts, the United Nations country team can ensure integration with other rule of law initiatives as well as link security sector reform processes to broader protection and human rights initiatives and economic and social development programmes.

58. It will also be necessary to further assess the Organization's gaps and resource requirements in security sector reform. The development of an adequate human resources capacity represents a particular challenge given the relative global shortage of expertise in security sector reform. Standardized job descriptions, the development of rosters of experts and training standards and programmes are also prerequisites for recruiting and retaining the appropriate expertise.

59. Given the distinct functions and responsibilities of various security institutions, the delivery of United Nations operational support should be specific to each component of the security sector. The designation of lead entities within the United Nations system for the coordination and implementation of support to specific components, based on mandate, capacities and comparative advantage, will

contribute to the coherence and effectiveness of United Nations efforts in the areas of security sector reform and help to avoid duplication and inefficiency.

60. Following broad system-wide consultations, the need to create a United Nations inter-agency security sector reform support unit was identified and its terms of reference outlined. The proposed unit would help to bring together the diverse existing and anticipated capabilities of United Nations actors and build on accumulated experiences. It would assist the Organization in linking the different and interrelated components of security in order to deliver coherent and coordinated support to national security sector reform processes. It could also provide a strategic policy development and backstopping capacity for the United Nations system on security sector reform. The inter-agency support unit would be hosted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Broad policy, guidance and the unit's work programme would be set through inter-agency consultation. The Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group would be briefed periodically on the work of the security sector reform support unit to ensure close coordination and consistency with broad system-wide policy.

61. This proposed technical and specialist support unit, composed of experts in their respective areas, could provide strategic guidance to security sector reform processes, generate best practices and guidelines, cooperate with relevant United Nations mechanisms, including the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, and serve as a focal point for partners. It could also assist in the development of rosters of experts and training modules and provide expert advice as required to Headquarters and field entities, inter alia, in the early assessment, planning and implementation of security sector reform processes as well as the development and enhancement of partnerships, as outlined in section IX below. As the support unit develops, relationships with existing mechanisms will need to be further clarified and its functioning reviewed and assessed.

62. Adequate financial resources will also be necessary for the development of United Nations capacity in security sector reform. Without sufficient and relatively predictable resources, the Organization will not be in a position to effectively support national efforts. At present, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes face resource constraints. Similarly, current budgetary provisions do not include support for most mandated activities in this vital field. As the United Nations develops policy and practice in security sector reform, it will be important to examine how mechanisms such as joint programming, pooled funds and trust funds might best be used to enable the United Nations to carry out its tasks in this area.

IX. Working with partners

63. The establishment of effective partnerships will be vital in providing effective support and expertise and adequate resources to national security sector reform processes. Member States, working in bilateral or multilateral partnerships with national actors, will remain central providers of support. The informal group of security sector reform friends, established at the initiative of Slovakia, could provide a useful forum for strategic dialogue between Member States and United Nations bodies, including the proposed inter-agency security sector reform support unit.

64. Regional and subregional organizations play critical roles in the elaboration of security sector reform policies and guidelines, as well as in the planning and implementation of related activities. Those already engaging in security sector reform, in particular the African Union, European Union and ECOWAS, are expected to serve as important partners and contributors to a United Nations approach to security sector reform. Partnership with African organizations, in particular, reflects the commitment of the United Nations to support the development of African peace, security and development capacities as well as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

65. An enhanced approach to security sector reform also requires cooperation with international financial institutions, including the World Bank and regional development banks, which are assuming more active roles in supporting the effective public administration of security institutions and the financial sustainability of security sector reform processes. Equally, research, non-governmental organizations and civil society actors can provide valuable specialist knowledge, advice and support.

66. The successful functioning of a broad network of partners rests upon the extent to which the international community can forge consensus on an enhanced approach to security sector reform, while also adapting in a responsive and flexible manner to the needs and priorities of each particular context. Cooperation with international partners could involve exchanging information and collaborating on lessons learned, generating best practices, developing security sector reform policies and guidelines, cooperating on standards, rosters and training for personnel and examining financial resource requirements. In specific contexts, cooperation could also include the elaboration of modalities for coordination and, where appropriate, joint assessments and evaluations, resource mobilization, joint operational activities and monitoring and review of security sector reform assistance.

X. Concluding observations and recommendations

67. The complex and substantial challenges posed to international peace and security repeatedly confirm that the security and well-being of peoples and States are fundamentally intertwined. The pursuit of peace, development and human rights is a collective responsibility and the bedrock of the United Nations.

68. The Organization's experience has demonstrated that effective cooperation must be based on a shared understanding of the goals and objectives of security sector reform, while respecting the different ways in which they are addressed by national actors. Supporting national efforts to put in place security arrangements that are responsive and accountable to people's needs should be one of the most fundamental tasks carried out by the United Nations in fulfilling its Charter obligations.

69. In this undertaking, the Organization can contribute to the development of a common understanding and approach to security sector reform. It can elaborate basic principles and standards and facilitate responsible and sustained international support for national efforts. By virtue of its mandate, legitimacy and presence, the United Nations can support national actors, particularly in post-conflict environments, to make informed security choices that are conducive to long-term development, sustainable peace and democratic governance. Through its mediation

and peacekeeping functions, as well as its peacebuilding and development activities, the United Nations can help create an enabling environment for security sector reform, as well as providing practical assistance in its implementation.

70. The United Nations is already undertaking these functions in many different contexts. Becoming an accessible and responsive partner for national, regional and international security sector reform actors is a priority. As an effective partner, the United Nations could facilitate the engagement of a range of expertise and resources, particularly from Member States, regional organizations and other partners, in the coordination and provision of support to national reform of the security sector. The Organization can also provide a transparent and inclusive forum for setting policy, assessing the implementation of security sector reform and discussing its evolving practice.

71. The present report contains a number of practical recommendations that could lead to the development of a holistic and coherent United Nations approach. These include:

(a) The development of security sector reform policies and guidance (para. 55);

(b) The development of strategic advisory and specialist capacities, particularly in priority gap areas, and the initiation of planning for the mobilization of appropriate resources (para. 56);

(c) The designation of lead entities for the delivery of effective support for security sector reform (para. 59);

(d) Where the Organization is mandated and/or requested to undertake security sector reform, the establishment of appropriate field capacities to ensure coherent and integrated implementation (para. 57), supported at Headquarters by an inter-agency security sector reform support unit (para. 60).

72. Ultimately, however, the development of an effective United Nations approach to security sector reform depends on national partners. The success of a country's efforts to elaborate and implement comprehensive security will depend on the commitment, leadership and capacity of national actors. Where a genuine will to build effective and accountable security does not exist or where there is no basic agreement between national actors on the objectives and the approach for national security arrangements, the potential contribution of the United Nations — and other partners — is limited at best. At the same time, national actors do not constitute a single entity; identifying all relevant and legitimate national partners is not always an easy task, particularly in conflict-affected States. A sense of national ownership grows from a consensus on security needs and priorities. The United Nations can contribute to building this consensus and promoting inclusive dialogue.

73. There are no quick fixes for establishing effective and accountable security institutions. The development of strategies, structures and capacities is a time-consuming effort. The evolution of perspectives, dialogue and understanding is equally a long-term process. As an organization of Member States, the United Nations serves as a permanent partner for national actors in the effort to build a world in which men and women can live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and the fear of violence, oppression or injustice.